

# Human rights as an effective way of fulfilling the salesian educative mission

## Results of a research among the chapter members of CG 26

Don Vito Orlando<sup>1</sup>

### **Premises**

The proposal to reflect on this theme has evoked in me a great interest for various reasons. From the time I started teaching Social Pedagogy at UPS I have tried to reflect and collect material on what could be recognized as “the specifics of Salesian Social Pedagogy” and on how to draw the profile of Don Bosco as a social pedagogue. It is an on-going interest and a continuous research and I hope that time will permit me to realize something significant as a tool for those who are involved in carrying out the Salesian mission in the world.

This interest was solicited all the more by the invitation of the 25<sup>th</sup> General Chapter: “To globalize our educational commitment”, “in order to give vigour and hope to the world of youth” (CG25, n.140). I consider this globalization not as the setting up of a multinational of education, but as a vital energy capable of diffusing itself and of bringing together in every part of the world all those who have an educative sensibility at heart to become true “benefactors of humanity” by assuming the fundamental duty of humanity as a whole, of every society and of every adult in every age: to transmit the culture of life in order to help everyone to become “a conscientious, free and responsible citizen of the world”.<sup>2</sup>

### **1. Two Providential Events**

All that was nurtured as a dream and thought about in their possible actualizations, seemed to me as practical and concretely realizable in the path that was opened by the strenna for 2008: the path of human rights as “a strategic frontier of a new education”, as an effective way of rethinking and re-proposing the Salesian Preventive System today at the world level.

But how do we go about making all this a possibility? How do we pass from dream to reality, from invitation to actualization, from a theoretical way to an evaluation of the possibilities in their concrete realization?

By divine providence (and I don't consider it exaggerated to see the intervention of God in this specific case) VIS has involved me in the project of sensitization for a commitment, which for them is already a project and a fruitful contribution for the promotion of human rights in general and of children who run the risk of being exploited and made use of in particular. The actualizing process was set in motion with the meetings of the scientific committee and with the charge given to me to prepare a questionnaire for evaluating the actual situation of our Congregation regarding our attention to, promotion of and sensitization about human rights in various parts of the world.

---

<sup>1</sup> Don Vito Orlando, Salesian, Social Pedagogy Professor, UPS University in Rome.

<sup>2</sup> Pontifical Academy of Sciences and Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, Message on “Globalization and Education”, at the conclusion of their first joint seminar, 16-17 November 2005, Casina Pio IV.

Having decided to involve the members of CG 26, who are the representatives and those responsible for the salesian mission, I tried to prepare a survey tool, which would allow us to gauge the existing situation at the level of initiatives present and their protagonists, specifying also the particularity of the initiative, the levels of sensibility, the practical actualization of human rights in the actual works of a province, and what should help the Salesians themselves to grow in the capacity “to educate promoting human rights”.

These aspects of the survey have been considered essential in order to create a map of the existing state of affairs, to evaluate the present reality and show the actual needs for improving the situation. However it is not possible to conceive of an action plan for the progress of education without the possibility of investing energy, passion, creativity etc. into it. They do not explode from the mind and heart of the educator if interior resources are lacking, resources which can stimulate them and carry them forward to concrete actualization. The interior energies are nourished by convictions and spiritual diligence which unite human action with the plan of God for the salvation of humanity.

The certitude of being called by God to actualize his work of creation (to complete it) and of salvation (foundation of the same creation) is the condition so that our educative work can enter into another horizon and can be lived as a pastoral action directed at establishing the kingdom of God... to evoke in the heart of every person the joy of being preferred and saved by God.

In order to explore this world of convictions and interior energies to be invested in the educative-pastoral mission, two questions were presented to the chapter members. It was done with the intention of exploring their convictions regarding the connection between the attention to and promotion of human rights on the one hand, and the actualization and safeguarding of the preventive system with human and social promotion dedicating oneself for a more just society on the other. It was also to see the connection between attention to and promotion of human rights on the one hand and evangelization on the other, which is the realization of a new world and the possibility of opening oneself to the transcendent (to recognize this is to concretize both the principle of the incarnation and the divinization of humanity).

This deepening of analysis has been deemed necessary in order to evaluate and interpret the levels of assimilation on the part of salesians of a reflection that has had decades of history, but which does not appear to be always present in everyone. The reflection has been about “the grace of unity”, “educate by evangelizing”, the awareness that it is education that helps one to discover the significance, the value and the dignity of life, that the Lord has come to reveal and open to us the fullness of life through his Gospel and his Resurrection. In short, the Mystics of education and of the educator is always a necessary condition for an authentic fulfillment of the salesian mission of education.

## **2. The Structure of the Research Report**

In the light of what we have said one understands better the strong stimulus offered by the reflection “Preventive System and Human Rights” and the great expectations and opportunities it helps us to foresee.

How to communicate and share them with salesians given the opportunity of this timely research? I would like to state clearly right at the outset that it is not to make use of the research to impose personal views which are not congruent with the objectives and contents of the survey done among the chapter members. It is rather an expression of the need for understanding the truth of the very formulation of the strenna 2008: to promote human rights

as one of the efficacious ways of educating with the heart of Don Bosco. Besides, the data regarding the reality always need theoretical reference points in order to be interpreted, and the correct comprehension of the empirical results always needs to be contextualized in order to grasp better their meaning and importance.

On the one hand the research dealt with helping to understand why the path of human rights can be seen today as “the strategic frontier for a new education” in the actual social reality and in the perspective of a globalized educational commitment. On the other hand it was also necessary to recall the essential features of the salesian educational paradigm in order to highlight the validity of the new perspective (attention to and promotion of human rights) for a renewed and shared educational commitment fully in line with the spirit and style of Don Bosco’s pedagogy.

For these reasons the first chapter of the research report offers some reflections in order to help to grasp “the importance of education for a united human society”. This calls for the duty to rethink education as a “social good” and the educational path of human rights as a condition for “world unity”, so that education is understood as a “great resource”, like a treasure to be recognized and valued in the actual world and in every society in which we live. A “culture of human rights” and a “pedagogy of human rights” can allow educational structures to help “discover and promote the innate rights of a person and defend the person’s inviolable dignity”,<sup>3</sup> to make possible a peaceful living together in actual multicultural societies and to succeed in appreciating the differences in an intercultural education.

The concept of inter-culture, creating and appreciating solidarity as “a cognitive, ethical and political resource”, will try to make a democratic living together which respects differences in a multicultural society possible. Even in this concrete situation in order to make the passage from multicultural to intercultural possible, in order to create a new mentality and a new ethos, a strong commitment at the level of education is needed, a commitment which is “capable of creating agreement, common action, global bonds, as well as new procedures of knowledge development attentive to the complexity, the difference and meta-cognitive horizons”.<sup>4</sup>

Intercultural education, therefore, especially in the encounter, comparison and direct dialogue between concrete persons, can give rise to recognition and expansion of common humanity, which concretely means “common recognition of rights, rights which emerge from this shared common humanity”.<sup>5</sup>

On the one hand it is necessary that these rights be “recognized, published and defended”, and on the other it is necessary that the debate around these be comprehensive because they are certainly the fundamental postulate of “the newest turning point of our history, in which innovation and humanity seem – for many aspects – to come together and such a coming together appears to be all the more necessary”.<sup>6</sup>

It deals with a “hope-principle” shot through with not a few shadows which globalization brings with it and above all the triumph of technique could really obscure what human rights intend to help to recognize as a priority at the global level: the value of the person and his dignity.

In the second chapter I have recalled the essential elements of the salesian educational paradigm, the cardinal points of “the salesian educative compass” in order to see its

---

<sup>3</sup> MORANTE G., *Per una pedagogia dei diritti umani*, “Note di Pastorale Giovanile”, 37(2003) 1, 65,

<sup>4</sup> CAMBI F., *Incontro e dialogo*, 46.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>6</sup> *Idem*, 51.

importance and recognize the need for new initiatives in a situation of “educational emergency”.

The objective of the second chapter is to understand how the globalization of our educational commitment as a specific task for the new millennium could be thought out and actualized. Obviously the reflection leads to the consideration of human rights as a “strategic frontier” for a new education. It deals with understanding how the motivations for our works can be changed in order to recognize the dignity of every youngster, and how “the pedagogy of respect for the young” can be made precise in order to promote their responsibility and autonomy etc.

This task is not absolutely irrelevant and the objective is not easy nor easily realized. To produce a cultural change through an educational system is certainly not easy and quick because there will be eyes that do not want to recognize the problem of the condition of minors and hearts that refuse to make a self-criticism about certain consolidated ways of acting and relating to youngsters. It will not be easy to make people accept significant changes in order to really make “a choice in favour of the more excluded and marginalized”.

To seek to change the society from within while carrying out our educative mission means to reawaken cultural and social energies in order to overcome situations of obvious injustice. It means to appeal to the social responsibility of all and to open the mind and will “to the exigencies of the good”.<sup>7</sup>

“We as humble sentinels of the Gospel must make the effort for a collective pedagogy in order to offer to many people concrete ways and projects in which we are also involved for a style of life that is authentic and generous.”<sup>8</sup>

That all this may not remain pure utopia, but can become a daily committed exercise of hope, and for not running the risk of appearing foolish and unprepared in this project for “a new humanism” in a globalized world through an educational project of promotion and defence of the rights of minors, we must find new efficacious modalities for expressing our social commitment and become more aware of its political import. It is also necessary to see the value of an education to citizenship and social awareness. That is “the place for practicing virtue in daily life and which can change our personal and social lives”.<sup>9</sup> In short it deals with whether we can create adequate strategies so that our educative mission will really express true prophetic courage.

### **3. The Results of the Survey Conducted among the Members of CG 26**

We shall begin by posing a question: What is the actual situation of our attention to and promotion of human rights especially of minors in the educational works of the Salesians in various parts of the world?

#### *3.1. A Survey of the Situation*

In the first place it is proposed to examine whether in the various activities carried out in the provinces there are initiatives, experiences, specific works, particular tasks carried out by Salesians etc., which are dedicated to the awareness, promotion and defence of human rights, especially those of minors. It is also to be seen whether these are pursued with an explicit planning and with definite formal contents or they remain only as actions which have a general style and orientation towards human rights with an attention to what happens in one’s own

<sup>7</sup> Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, n. 28.

<sup>8</sup> J.E. Vecchi, *Si commosse per loro*, p.32.

<sup>9</sup> F. Motto, *Ripartire da Don Bosco*, p. 166.

context. This analysis has been extended to the various forms of educative action and to the diverse modalities of commitment even of individual Salesians which could be the sign of a passion for justice and social solidarity.

It is also important to analyze the consequences of this awareness and whether it is able to evoke an operative dynamism leading to the individuation and realization of specific itineraries of participation in the work of education and promotion of human rights within the salesian communities as well as in their collaboration with other agencies in the area.

At the conclusion of this analysis and evaluation of the situation, we have also inserted into the questionnaire a query which would express clearly the capabilities, the sensibilities and the will to put into practice respect for human rights in everything that is done through the works of the province. It would be of little comfort to find an appreciable attention at the level of educational sensibility and a lack of respect for human rights with regard to persons in our works where we are trying to promote this sensibility.

Another question of this first part put to the chapter members was asking them to specify what would be needed to help Salesians to appreciate fully this reference to human rights in their educative activity.

We have considered it important to listen to the suggestions of the provincials and the delegates of CG 26 to give direction to the choice of interventions and the preparation of useful tools which would increase the possibility of carrying out the mission through education and promotion of human rights.

**A. A Comprehensive picture whether initiatives for the promotion and/or protection of human rights especially of minors are present or not:**

85.2% of the chapter members have indicated the presence of similar initiatives in their own provinces. Only 12.8% have said that no such initiatives are present.

The picture of the existing situation can be specified under two sections: firstly the various initiatives and their protagonists, and secondly those who carry them out.

*The initiatives for the protection / promotion of the rights of minors*

Initiatives	total
Not indicated	9.4
Street children / boys	26.0
Formative courses for minors in difficulty	32.3
Homes for minors, migrants and others	24.4
Cultural initiatives for sensitization	26.8
Provincial plan of promotion / prevention	15.7
Various formative interventions	44.8
Others	3.2
Total	100.0

- *Shelter for street children*: a roof for those without home and family, giving attention to minors who are without any point of reference...

- to offer *formative opportunities for youth at risk*: introducing them to the world of work, accelerated training courses etc.

- *communities offering hospitality, case famiglia (family houses)*, centres for unaccompanied minors and foreigners.

- initiatives which have a cultural character and which seek to sensitize others regarding the situation of minors in difficulty.

- *Provincial plan of promotion / prevention*: projects for the protection of minors from abuse.

- all the *formative activities*, whether directed to the young or to the formators themselves.

*Those who carry out the initiatives of promotion / protection of the rights of minors*

Initiatives	total
Not indicated	3.9
Individual salesians	24.4
Entire communities	37.0
Groups of salesians and laity	56.7
Organizations that have originated in the salesian ambient for this purpose	21.3
Organizations coordinated by salesians	15.0
Some salesians who participate with other organizations	16.5
Others	16.5
Total	100.0

In many ways we are still in the phase where individual good will begins to coagulate around engrossing experiences. But there is a preference for flexible experiences from the institutional point of view in order to ascertain with greater freedom the impact and the efficacy of specific investments at the ecclesial and social levels. Nevertheless, it is significant that there are communities that work towards the promotion and protection of the more needy children in original ways, both as a sign of fidelity to the salesian charism and of dialogue and collaboration with other initiatives.

**B. The modality of education to human rights and the levels reached:** The attention to and promotion of human rights can be both deliberate and unintentional, and may be realized either in institutional contexts or in the ordinary praxis of everyday life. Therefore we speak of Formal Education, Non-formal Education and Informal Education, each with its specific modality of working.

*Modality of Education to Human Rights*

Modality of Education to Human Rights	total
Not indicated	13.4
Formal Education in Schools	36.9
Non-formal education	53.7
Informal education	47.7
Others	18.8
Total	100.0

**Formal Education**

- In connection with specific disciplines, active methods of learning...
- Participation in initiatives, organisms of participation...

**Non-formal Education**

- Reciprocal respect, conscientization, voluntary participation, encounters with witnesses etc.

**Informal Education**

- Ordinary situations and relationships, exhibitions, demonstrations, appeals, meetings etc.

At what point are we regarding both the extension of initiatives and action and the level of sensitization about education and promotion of human rights in the various provinces? On these two aspects we had asked the chapter members explicitly to clearly indicate the situation of their provinces on a hierarchical scale. In order to evaluate better the levels reached in individual regions, besides the percentage based on the responses given, we have also

worked out a comprehensive average and shown the significance of the differences between the regions.

*Levels reached in the education to and promotion of Human Rights*

Levels of education to HR	total
1. Nothing is done	8.7
2. Something with little local relevance	11.4
3. Continuity is missing	24.8
4. We are in the phase of sensitization	47.0
5. a good level of awareness has been reached	18.1
6. involved in valid initiatives	32.2
7. capable of important initiatives	10.7
8. Extending participation to the Salesian Family	26.2
Other	6.7
Not responded	3.4
Average score	5.176

Levels of Promotion of HR	total
1. Nothing is done	4.7
2. Something with little local relevance	10.1
3. Continuity is missing	17.3
4. We are in the phase of sensitization	41.6
5. involved in valid initiatives	40.3
6. capable of important initiatives	17.4
7. Extending participation to the Salesian Family	22.1
Other	2.0
Not responded	6.0
Average score	4.855

The **collective level for education to Human Rights** for the entire salesian world is expressed by the average score. Taking into account the responses and the choices in the hierarchy of alternatives offered, we have calculated average score that go progressively from 1 to 8. The average score that expresses the actual situation of the congregation is 5.176. It indicates a sensitization that is opening itself to deep awareness, an awareness that needs consideration, verification and discernment so that it may give rise to mature and convincing proposals of action.

The **collective level for the promotion of Human Rights** for the entire salesian world is shown by the average score of 4.855, calculated on a progressive scale of 1 to 7. It indicates that there is quite a well diffused sensitization and there are many significant initiatives.

**C. What the confreres need to be able to educate “promoting human rights”**

After having explored all that could serve us for mapping the existing situation, we could not but ask for suggestions about what the confreres actually need in order to be really enabled to promote rights in their educative work.

What the salesians need	total
Not indicated	4.7
Formative programmes	61.7
Give attention during the basic formation years	59.1
Prepare guidelines for formation meetings	49.0
A virtual space for contacts and for sharing materials	30.2
Create a virtual salesian web	40.9
Guidelines for translating the strenna into concrete initiatives	57.7
Other	3.4
Total	100.0 <sup>10</sup>

*Urgent needs of Formation:* Attention, sensitization and the capacity to intervene are related to the possibility of giving formative experiences extended also to the Salesian Family.

*Necessity for adequate guidelines:* the need for good guidelines, adequate materials which help to facilitate better formation encounters.

*New Space for relationship and exchange:* the virtual space is seen as a new opportunity

- To create a salesian website on education to human rights,
- To encourage contacts and exchange of material between communities that are distant in actual space.

#### **D. In the light of the data presented it is good to call attention to some important aspects**

The problem has global dimensions and must preserve its universal character:

- To overcome the risk that every reality measures its own pastoral zeal (temperature) in a way that refers only to itself.
- To comprehend the question of human rights beginning from a multiplicity of cultural perspectives in order to evaluate more strictly one's own ecclesial and social presence.
- So that the urgency of team work may be considered with greater awareness: it is important that the different salesian provinces listen to one another so that the talents of each territory will be joined to those of others. A true commitment to sustain rights is possible only through this spirit of dialogue.

The forms of participation in the attention to and promotion of human rights must be revised:

- To grow in the capacity to work in a collaborative way within salesian structures.
- To overcome forms of collaborative participation at the experiential level according to a subaltern logic rather than a true co-responsibility (especially in the relationship between religious and laity).
- To give priority to **how** and **why** certain initiatives are promoted and to safeguard the centrality of educative relationships, to appreciate the same youth as the fruit and sign of charity and sound spirituality.

It is necessary to start afresh from formation:

- Stressing the aspect of **being** before **knowing** and **doing**.
- Enriching existential competencies before the cultural and technical.

<sup>10</sup> The total is more than 100 because each person could give more than one response to the question.

- Without putting a time sequence of formation and action, one is intertwined with the other.

### *3.2. Deepening the meaning of the educative way of human rights*

The analysis of the actual situation has not stopped with what is to be done and who does it. In order to grasp the innovative range of this new educative path we wanted to examine the levels of awareness on the part of salesians about the educative and pastoral worth of the promotion of human rights. The meaning of this evaluation is the following: if salesians are not really convinced that the “path of human rights” allows them to fully actualize their educative mission, it is clear that they will commit themselves to the maximum in some initiatives, but will not go beyond. They will continue to do what has been done so far and will not think it useful or necessary to rethink ways of putting the preventive system into practice from the perspective of human rights and in particular of the rights of children/minors.

We shall make a quick presentation of this part inviting all to a personal study of chapter four, although it might cause a little intellectual fatigue. In this short presentation we shall try to be simple and clear to help to understand the results of the research.

#### 3.2.1. The educative efficacy of the path of human rights

In no.12 of the questionnaire there were some implicit objectives which we wanted to examine in order to ascertain the actual perception of the effectiveness of education to and promotion of human rights. For each of the objectives we had inserted some alternatives in the question.

Regrouping the various parts of the question we can give a comprehensive picture of what we wanted to explore in the following schema.

For example, the alternatives 1 (to promote the culture of life), 3 (the recognition of the other, the different), and 4 (respect for the dignity of the life of all) of question no.12 were different aspects of the objective indicated as **anthropological and cultural commitment**, which can be achieved through commitment to education and promotion of human rights. The chapter members could indicate how salesians considered their commitment to education and promotion of human rights as promoting a culture of life by responding with ‘very’, ‘sufficient’, ‘little’ or ‘not at all’. Since 72.5% say that they are very convinced, the collective medium is very close to 1 (1.23 to be precise). For every objective we have calculated the average score of effectiveness, the result of having considered each of the alternatives associated with each objective. The criterion for interpreting the average score is as already indicated: the more it comes closer to 1, the more the chapter members consider it highly possible to attain the objective and/or be able to realize what is contained each of the aspects to which the objectives make reference.

**Education to and promotion of human rights is for us:**

**12a. an anthropological and cultural commitment that aims at [1.280]**

- 1. promoting a culture of life [1.23]
- 3. the recognition of the other, of the different [1.51]
- 4. respect for the dignity of the life of all [1.27]

**12c. commitment for a more just society [1.536]**

- 6. a more democratic society open to co-responsibility [1.70]
- 2. collaboration with other agencies to create a more just society [1.64]
- 5. prevention of abuse of power and breach of trust against the weak [1.50]
- 9. construction of a more just world opposed to the economically and politically powerful [1.85]

**12b. commitment to education [1.587]**

- 11. promotion of education as a condition for enjoying the rights [1.57]
- 8. to allow development to every one according to one's capacity and commitment [1.83]
- 7. to form an active and responsible citizenship [1.59]

**12d. actualization of the preventive system [1.634]**

- 12. actualization of the preventive system beginning with human rights [1.71]
- 10. insertion of salesian pedagogy in all the present cultures [1.73]

Observing attentively the four objectives highlighted in the above table, there emerges very clearly that the opinions of the chapter members become more uncertain, the response 'very' becomes less and tends towards 'sufficient' and the responses 'little' or 'not at all' increase. The average score shows that the opinions converge more with regard to anthropological commitment and social justice. They tend to differ when dealing with objectives that are more specific to education or when referring explicitly to the actualization of the preventive system.

### 3.2.2. The educative and pastoral effectiveness of the path of human rights

To educate "with the heart of Don Bosco" it is necessary to embark upon the "integral development of the young" opening them to the religious horizon (helping them to discover their dignity as 'children of God') as conditions of "authenticity and fullness". To emphasize, therefore, education to and promotion of human rights, especially of children, as an effective way for the actualization of the preventive system, must shine forth clearly and must be understood by all who work in the spirit and charism of the salesian mission, also as a valid perspective for "a renewed pastoral commitment".

The last question proposed to the chapter members was aimed at examining their perception about the effectiveness of the educative and pastoral work of salesians who are attentive to human rights as the concrete actualization of the concept, *to evangelize by educating*.

Here too we shall give an example to make things clearer. The average score that indicates the various opinions of the chapter members regarding the possibility of "enriching the human content of the educative proposal" through educative and pastoral action that is attentive to human rights is obtained from the total percentage of the responses which are the following.

To what extent do you consider the educative-pastoral action attentive to human rights as effective for	NR	Very	Sufficient	little	Not at all	Average
1. Enriching the human content of the educative proposal	7.4	49.0	34.9	6.7	2.0	1.59

All the results which we have obtained are reported in the table below where the lines highlighted indicate the objectives we wanted to ascertain in the perception of the chapter members. As we are able to see in their formulation, there is a gradation between the path of human rights and activity with specifically religious or pastoral intent.

<b>Possible objectives and contents of the educative-pastoral action</b>	<b>Average score</b>
<b>A. Safeguard the contents of the educative proposal</b>	<b>1.507</b>
Enrich the human content of the educative proposal	1.59
Reveal and recognize the value and dignity of each one.	1.48
<b>B. To Evangelize by educating</b>	<b>1.640</b>
An effective educative path to help to discover the value of education for the proclamation of the Gospel	1.79
To live the salesian mission committing oneself to the poorer and the marginalized	1.53
<b>C. A possible new world</b>	<b>1.652</b>
The prophecy of a new world	1.86
To make the concrete conditions of life our own and commitment to improve them	1.73
To give to the salesian congregation the capacity to make its voice heard in the civil society at the world level.	1.72
<b>D. The exigency of incarnation-divinization of man</b>	<b>1.905</b>
To recognize and appreciate the principle and the event of the incarnation	1.92
To be open to the ultimate, to the divinization of man	1.99

The average score of each objective moves away from the more positive, which as we have said is 1, and tends gradually towards the specifically religious level: it moves from 1.507 for the really educational goal of making known the human content of education and promoting the dignity of the person, to 1.905 for the goal of arriving at a connection between incarnation and transcendence through attention to human rights.

### 3.2.3. Interdependence between the two dimensions (educational and educative-pastoral)

In the light of the preceding results we ask ourselves: according to the opinions expressed by the chapter members, is the path of human rights really capable of securing the integrity of the salesian educational proposal? Is it an effective way that is new and creative, capable of concrete mediation of the principle of incarnation and capable of leading the human person to be open to the hope of divinization?

As we have already indicated, our interest was to analyse the opinion of the chapter members regarding the relationship between education and pastoral both at the ideal and operative levels, and see if the salesian vision could concretely be actualized in our attention to and promotion of human rights especially of children. The fundamental motive for this analysis is this: this way can be adopted and insisted upon only if there is a conviction that we are not constrained to sacrifice something or give up some important aspect of the salesian pedagogy; only if there is a widespread conviction that it is a path that really allows the full actualization of the preventive system; only if what is written by the Rector Major in his commentary to the strenna 2008 is understood and shared – “For us Salesians, education to human rights, in particular those of juveniles, is the best way to put into practice in different settings our commitment to prevention, to all-round human development, to the building of a world that is more equitable, more just, more healthy. The language of human rights also enables us to discuss our pedagogy and introduce it into the different cultures of the world.”<sup>11</sup>

If human rights and their affirmation are a sign of our times, it is necessary to see how to make them enter into theological reflection and introduce them into pastoral action. If the path of human rights can lead us to recognize the value and the dignity of each person, it can also make us recognize the event of the incarnation and be valued for presenting Christ “the perfect man” who leads every one who decide to follow him “to become more human” (GS, 41).

We have compared the two dimensions in order to see the eventual connection, interdependence and the significance of the statistics in their relationship with each other. In other words, is it possible to say that there exists a connection between educative efficacy and pastoral effectiveness? If education to human rights is recognized as the actualization of the preventive system, is there an equally strong conviction that the salesian mission can be realized through integral education?

In order to ascertain the presence of eventual factors capable of connecting the two aspects and be able to explain the variations with respect to the average score of the results obtained, we have made a further analysis of the various factors. The resulting matrix has highlighted two factors with the results reported in the following table.

Table 30: Results of the analysis of the two factors

Objectives : Construed variables	Factor 1	Factor 2
12a. Anthropological and cultural commitment	.104	.749
12b. Commitment for a more just society	.144	.836
12c. Commitment to education	.250	.872
12d. Actualization of the preventive system	.221	.761
13a. <i>Safeguard the educational proposal</i>	.863	.184
13b. <i>To evangelize by educating</i>	.890	.201
13c. <i>To create a new world</i>	.876	.255
13d. <i>Incarnation-divinization of man</i>	.885	.129

In order to understand better the significance of what we are saying, it is necessary to clarify that the analysis of the factors is a technique of statistics which helps to bring out “the

<sup>11</sup> P. Chavez, *Commentary to the Strenna 2008*, p.26.

existence of a series of latent dimensions underlying a series of inter co-relations".<sup>12</sup> If we need to ascertain the possible inter co-relations between educational objectives and educative-pastoral goals, it is necessary to see if there are common latent dimensions. These common elements would demonstrate the existing interrelationship between the two aspects.

The factor analysis which we have done, in fact, has highlighted two latent dimensions (two factors) which explain a considerable percentage of the variants: the first 40.4% and the second 34.4%, a total of 74.8%. Moreover, the particular aspect that emerges out of this analysis is the following. As can be seen from the data highlighted in the table, the first factor explains in a significant way the variations that are there among the construed variables regarding the objectives of the educative-pastoral action (those associated with no.13 of the questionnaire); the second factor refers fundamentally to the variables of the educational objectives connected with education to and promotion of human rights (those associated with no.12 of the questionnaire). It is also able to explain the dispersion of opinions regarding the possible objectives of education to and promotion of human rights.

The significance of these results is the following: between these two aspects (one more educational and the other more pastoral) there is no significant interrelationship, they are quite independent. The educational dimension which stresses more the socio-cultural and anthropological aspects, and the pastoral dimension which highlight the biblical / evangelical elements, are not significantly interrelated.

These results of the comparison between the two examined dimensions finally confirm what has emerged from the analysis of each of them: the thoughts, perceptions and convictions expressed by the chapter members do not always converge; the criteria that guide the daily activities of the salesian educative and pastoral work do not have a widened and deepened awareness of the effectiveness of an explicit attention to human rights.

There is need for a greater sensitization and a well-planned formation in order to give rise to a mature conviction that the path of human rights is indeed the effective way today for the actualization of the preventive system. At the same time this way of actualization is that which allows the insertion of the salesian educative mission in the cultures and contexts where it is carried out. Moreover, a mature pastoral planning, capable of extending collaboration to all who are sensitive and directly committed to education, is necessary. In this work of sensitization and experimenting with new ways of carrying out the salesian mission various things can further its effectiveness like internet connectivity and communication, comparison and exchange of existing good practices, creating a data bank of positive experiences and problems to be faced from which all can share and to which all can contribute.

Conclusion: Necessary conditions for the effectiveness of the path of human rights

In order that the salesian educational commitment can be realized effectively along the path of human rights, there must be a shared base of information and a working methodology which can help in seeing this as a possible way and can clear the ground of every incomprehension and possible diffidence.

1. One cannot walk the path of human rights especially the rights of minors in our educative-pastoral action without knowing them, without grasping the anthropological principles that inspire them, and the educative finality that they explicitly specify.<sup>13</sup> This

---

<sup>12</sup> K. D. Bailey, *Metodi della ricerca sociale*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1995, p.585.

<sup>13</sup> The official commentary on the goals of education elaborated by the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights is very interesting and may be very useful for understanding well the sense and role of the first paragraph of article 29 of the Convention for the Rights of Minors: OBSERVATION GÉNÉRALE No 1 (2001), *Les buts de l'éducation*, (Paragraphe 1 de l'article 29) – <http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/2a118d097f04449e8025677f005953be?OpenNavigator>

knowledge should help to understand that the anthropological vision that underlies them does not exclude any specific perspective of fullness and that at the same time it inspires an ethical vision that promotes freedom and responsibility.

2. The other necessary clarification that must be made, in order to evaluate the way of human rights in the educative-pastoral action of the salesians, refers to the need for fostering a strong conviction about the relationship of mutuality between education and pastoral, between gospel and education. To carry out an educative-pastoral task in the salesian style requires the capacity and pedagogical acumen to actualize an irrevocable rapport between human maturity and Christian growth, and to assume the same task as a way of collaborating with God in the growth of the human person. They are not two distinct tasks, but two aspects of the same task which calls for the creativity of the educator-artist, animated by pastoral charity, in order to actualize a “mutual exchange” and their “harmonious integration”.<sup>14</sup> From here springs the need to reflect on “the mutual relationship between human maturation and Christian growth” which for us “must be considered basic and indispensable in all the situations. The true and effective application of our own Constitutions (art. 31 to 43) depends on its correct interpretation. So, an anthropological twist, yes; but with Christ, the new man at the top!”<sup>15</sup> This reference to the New Man can really help us to rethink our commitment to the promotion of human rights helping us to understand the realization of human life.

All this requires new types of competence: in the first place competence connected with the reading of the reality and pedagogical planning. It deals with an endeavour which in the first place has the character of self-formation for each individual salesian and for the entire Congregation, but which must also at the same time become a privileged attention to and service towards the region. To invest in this action does not mean to subtract from energy and time dedicated to the youth, but to multiply the resources directed to them with abundant action which improve the conditions in which young people live, grow and become aware of their rights and duties.

It is worth the while, therefore, that the salesian communities become the throbbing motor of a permanent task of research, reflection, formation, collection and documentation of experiences, which are to be generously put at the disposition of all. And it would really be important that with this style of presence our communities become outposts which help to intercept the changes already in progress in a shorter period of time, not necessarily to favour them, but to orient them better to help all – especially the youth – to be active in the world of cultural, social and political innovations as protagonists and not merely as spectators (even marginal and silent).

It means, therefore, to make courageous and far-sighted choices above all which do not distort the salesian charism, but which, on the contrary, uphold it and make it transparent also to those who do not know about still or are not wont to appreciate it. To do this, however, we need a critical rethinking of our work, more enthusiasm about what is new, and “remember wisely” in order to realize a greater resemblance and harmonization with the heart of Don Bosco.

Vito Orlando  
Professor of Social Pedagogy  
Vice-rector, UPS

---

<sup>14</sup> Cf. E. Viganò, *Nuova Educazione*, Atti del Consiglio Generale, LXXII (1991) 3371 19. This letter of the eighth successor of Don Bosco is the most enlightened document regarding the education-evangelization nexus. In the introduction to the letter, Don Viganò speaks of an “educational emergency” and sees it in the massive “anthropological twist” that culturally runs the risk of falling into a “reductive anthropocentrism”.

<sup>15</sup> *Idem*, p. 6.